

DIME NOVEL ROUND-UP



A monthly magazine devoted to the collecting, preservation and literature of the old-time dime and nickel novels, libraries and popular story papers.

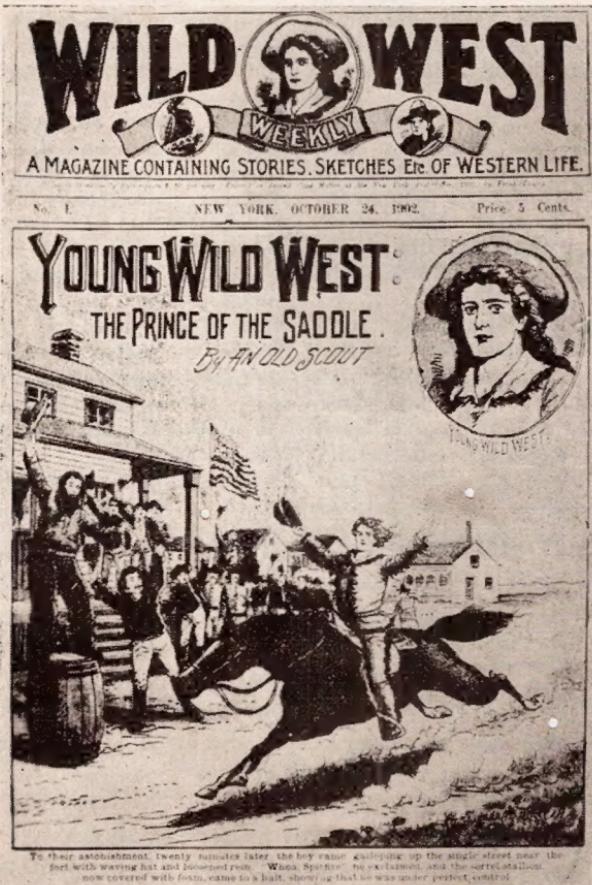
Vol. 25, No. 6

June 15, 1957

Whole No. 297

Four-Footed Friends of Our Dime Novel Heroes

By J. Edward Leithead



To their astonishment twenty minutes later the boy came galloping up the single street near the fort with waving hat and lowered rifle. Wanda, Spiritfire's owner, who had seen the corral collapse, now covered with foam, came to a halt, shouting that he was under perfect control.

No. 1 of Wild West Weekly showing "Spitfire" after being tamed by Young Wild West.

(From the Charles Duprez Dime Novel Picture Collection)

Four-Footed Friends of Our Dime Novel Heroes

By J. Edward Leithard

Except for that hardy breed of forest ranger of the early Eastern frontier, who were called woods-runners and depended mainly on shank's mare, most of our dime novel heroes of the wide open spaces were horsemen. But for their horses, some of which became almost as well-known as the riders, how else would they have been able to track down and fight Indians and outlaws, hunt buffalo and herd cattle. Only a very few, prospectors and soldiers of the United States infantry or "walk-a-heaps" as the Indians termed them, did much walking, and even the bluecoats sometimes fought as mounted infantry on the Western plains.

A mule might do in a pinch, but there was only one mule that ever gained prominence in the old libraries and weeklies—Toofer (a shortening of Two-for-a-Nickel), the unruly mount of the Baron Villum Von Schnitzenhauser in The Buffalo Bill Stories.

Cody himself probably had as many different horses as anyone in dime noveldom. Two that he actually rode in real life, Powder Face and Buck-skin Joe, were not often mentioned. (Mark Twain wrote an entertaining little book, "A Horse's Tale", pub-

lished by Harpers, I think, an autobiography' of Soldier Boy, Buffalo Bill's "favorite horse, out of dozens." An extract from this was printed in some of the Buffalo Bill's Wild West and Pawnee Bill's Far East "magazine and official review" books. The celebrated humorist was a faithful patron of the Wild West show.)

Various dime novel authors invented various war horses for the famous scout and plainsman—I remember one named Midnight in several issues—but the horse most closely associated with him in Indian-fighting, carrying Cody week after week in the pages of The Buffalo Bill Stories, was Bear Paw, a mighty black charger that, luckily, always escaped the bullets of hostile redskin and white.

And, curiously enough, Bear Paw, another black charger, was earlier the favorite mount of Diamond Dick, Senior. In fact, black horses seem to have been the most popular among dime novel heroes. This is partly understandable when one considers how well a night-hued animal blends with a night-shaded landscape, and that, quite often, their riders were abroad on night-time missions and wished to escape detection.

The younger Diamond Dick, during

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Ralph F. Cummings, Fisherville, Mass.

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publication in the following month's issue.

a long run of stories by George C. Jenks, always rode a black thoroughbred named Major. He was an intelligent, highly trained animal who could outrun the powerful roan, Towser, owned by Handsome Harry, Tammany, Billy Doo's cantankerous, hammer-headed white horse, and Belle Bellair's mare, Daisy, and sometimes Major needed to be held in by that superb rider and horse-lover, Diamond Dick, Junior.

Another famous black horse of the same name—Major—carried Captain Dick Slater, of the Liberty Boys, through campaigns and spy-work of the American Revolution. Dick Slater, as far as I know, was never without Major after capturing him from General Howe at the Battle of Long Island in No. 2 of The Liberty Boys of '76. One would think that Major, who had run consistently through the series, would have been the selection when one of the authors decided to feature a horse in a story. But no, there's no reference to Major in No. 511, The Liberty Boys and Black Bess, or, The Horse That Won the Fight.

Still another black horse was Sultan, the mount of Ted Strong, hero of Rough Rider Weekly. Ted rode other horses, too, but Sultan was the prize of the saddle bunch at Moon Valley Ranch, trained to working cattle. Stella Fosdick, Ted's girl pard, had several favorite mounts, one of which was Magpie. Magpie came to a sad but not uncommon end for a cowpony, going down in a cattle stampede in No. 148, King of the Wild West's Lost Circle S Brand. A wild horse named Custer was featured in No. 87, King of the Wild West in the Corral, but, as I recall, this horse lasted but a single issue.

Deadwood Dick, the Prince of the Road, also rode a black horse.

One horse that wasn't black in color and probably should take the blue ribbon for continuous appearances, becoming almost as well-known as his owner, was Young Wild West's sorrel stallion, Spitfire. He was a wild horse, about to be turned loose

by Cheyenne Charlie as unconquerable, when Wild happened along at Fort Bridger, Wyoming, and broke him to saddle in No. 1 of Wild West Weekly. Spitfire was on the cover then and he appeared often on the covers thereafter. I don't recall that he was ever wounded or stolen, he bore a charmed equine life, and many times, by speed and endurance, not only saved Wild but Arieta Murdock from disaster. As a race-horse he beat the best an Army post could offer in horseflesh in No. 245, Young Wild West and the Cavalry King, or, The Race With a Rival Rider.

A little pinto, Navi, was the proud possession of Little Cayuse, the Piute Indian boy who figured in many of The Buffalo Bill Stories; and when Pawnee Bill was introduced in that weekly, he unfailingly rode a buckskin named Chick-Chick.

Probably the two most eccentric horses in Wild West literature were Diana and Nebuchadnezzar, owned respectively by the two Nicks, Wharton and Nomad, old-time trappers and bordermen extraordinary in The Buffalo Bill Stories. Both horses were bag-of-bones specimens, but not nearly as dilapidated as their appearance would indicate. They were capable of surprising antics and bursts of running in desperate moments. "Nebby", as Nomad called his horse for short, was named after the Biblical character, Nebuchadnezzar, King of Babylon, who subsisted on grass.

Once, in the Yellowstone country, Old Nomad was surprised by a Sioux war party. As they caught up with him, Nebby was limping along like a horse that wouldn't last until sundown. Nick slyly challenged the chief of the war party to a race. The Indian gleefully took him up, thinking the seeming crowbait couldn't hold even a quarter mile, let alone beat him out. The white borderman's scalp was a surety, just as well have some fun with him first. The race started, Nebby gradually losing his limp, his four legs pistonning like mad and carrying his buckskin-clad rider far, far ahead of the chief. The Sioux never

did catch him, though the whole war party pelted in pursuit when they saw how they had been tricked.

What eventually became of Nebby, I can't say—since the authors of The Buffalo Bill Stories never said that I remember—but Nick Nomad got him a horse named Hide-rack, presumably of similar crowbait appearance, though there was never much said about him, and the old trapper rode Hide-rack for many issues in the company of Buffalo Bill. Seldom mentioned were two horses ridden by the border deadshot, Wild Bill Hickok: Ajax and Siwash. In real life, Wild Bill owned a beautiful black mare, Black Nell.

Siroc was a horse that got the limelight in the James Boys Weekly as the mount of Jesse James. His name appears in the title of No. 5, Jesse James and Siroc, or, A Detective's Chase for a Horse. In this issue, reprinted from New York Detective Library Nos. 386 and 647, Carl Greene, the detective, tries his utmost to get away with Jesse's favorite horse. Another mount of the Missouri outlaw was given prominence in Jesse James Stories No. 108, Jesse James and His Demon Horse, or, A True Pard to the Outlaw King.

Only occasionally were horses and dogs brought into tales of the Merriwell brothers. Nemo was a race-horse purchased by Frank in No. 49, and Black Beauty was another in No. 160. While heading the School of Athletic Development, Frank had a stable at Bloomfield and a favorite saddle horse, also one at his Wyoming ranch.

As for dog heroes, one took a leading part in Tip Top No. 366, then there was the little terrier, Joker, owned by Brick-Top Ben in the early issues of Diamond Dick, Jr. Weekly. And Trot, the Coach dog or dalmatian, who was introduced in the second Young Wide Awake story (Wide Awake Weekly No. 42), helping Dick Halstead fight a drunk who was delaying him on the way to a fire. Trot, adopted by the firehouse crew, became their mascot and performed

many amazing feats. He was featured on numerous Wide Awake covers.

Pedro, the dog detective, was a trusted four-footed assistant of Nick Carter's in cases where a Cuban bloodhound could be used to nose out criminals; first appearing in No. 469 of New Nick Carter Weekly, Pedro was on the cover then and later issues, too. And once Nick similarly employed a great Royal Bengal tiger, Prince. This jungle beauty appeared in a trilogy of circus mystery tales by Mr. Dey. Prince's appearance in the New York subway with Nick at night considerably startled beholders, as may be guessed.

Although in no sense a "four-footed friend", the orang-outang in New Nick Carter Weekly No. 666, Nick Carter's Master Struggle, or, The Battle With the Man-monkey, afforded memorable exciting moments when Nick encountered him in the basement of a house. The great ape, owned by a criminal the detective was tracking, broke his chains and rushed Nick, and the latter had need of all the strength which gained him fame as "The Little Giant", plus a pistol, to survive this struggle. The story was by W. Bert Foster, and Foster at his best.

The End

NEWSY NEWS

By Ralph F. Cummings
Fisherville, Mass.

Looking over my English penny dreadfuls, says Bob Smeltzer, I see that No. 12 of the Aldine First Rate Pocket Library contained the authentic story of "Reckless Ralph," or The Hero of 'Way Down East. Oho, so they eventually caught up with you even across the big pond.

Just heard from P. J. Moran of Concord, Calif. Jan. 16. Last, he was in the hospital and had an operation on his right eye, for a cataract.

Rev. Don L. Steinhauer was up here from Phila., Pa. on April 22, also May 19 & 20. The last time he was here, he stayed over night with me. Hope he slept all o.k. We had some

chatting and did some trading too. Peter Scallo of Norwood was also here the 11th of May, and we did some chatting and dealing too.

There's a fine article on "Set the Indians Free," in the Westerners Brand book for April 1952, also Western Americana. Vol. 14, No. 2 is the number. Don Russell is the editor of this fine mag.

Denis Rogers of Montreal, Canada was down to Ralph Smiths a few days after Ellis material for his book, and left there for here on May 7th, and Ed Le Blanc of Fall River came up. They met here, and that evening we went back to Fall River. There we stayed a few days, then on Thursday we left for Stoughton, to an antique store, but didn't find much. Then we went up to Leo Murphys in Reading, and got some stuff there, but poor Denis didn't find a thing. Then we 3 went up to Ralph Smiths and stayed quite late. Then Ed and myself came back to Fall River. Denis stayed at Ralph Smiths, and left for Canada the next day. We were to go up and visit Bill Burns, and Geo. French, but the plans were changed all around.

So we'll apologize for not getting up to see Bill Burns and others, another time, we'll make sure.

Carl Linville hasn't been feeling too good. The old asthma is acting up again.

Anyone got ony Merriwells in Med-al & New Med-al Libraries? I want these numbers in good condition #189 260 340 407 431 437 452 470 482 485 494 512 527 551 563 644 650 668 671 682 698 702 704 709 718 720 724 726 728 732 734 736 738 740 742 748 750 752 754 756 758 762 764 766 768 770 772 776 784 786 788 790 792 794 796 798 800 802 806 808 810 814 816 818 820 822 826 828 830 844 847 848 849 850 852 854 857 858 also to replace poor copies 708 712 419 620 812. Have others to trade, or will buy. What Nos. do you need?

Also want No. 62 of Westbrooks Deadwood Dick Library.

Geo. Sahr has started to read the first Jack Wright story in the Boys Star Library, and he says its great.

Here it is after midnight, so guess its Saturday morning, and I'm dead tired, so long fellers.

Ralph F. Cummings

CLARA AUGUSTA JONES

1839-1905

Edited by Ralph Adimari

This remarkable portrait of a woman was written by another woman. Miss or Mrs. Florence C. Shepherd of Framingham, Mass., Oct. 25, 1914. It was sent to Mr. William J. Renners Jr. for his book *Cyclopedia of Popular Authors* which he never published. It is given verbatim with no change in words or punctuation:

"I have at last procured a copy of Mrs. Trask's poems from a friend, which I will mail to you today. It is impossible to get a new copy, and this one that has been used quite a little, is the only extra copy to be found. The price for the new copies was \$1.50 but as this is a second-hand one, it would be only half that . . . Mrs. Trask . . . was born in New Hampshire and her maiden name was Clara Augusta Jones. She was an only child, and began to write poetry when a very young girl.

Sometime in her twenties she loved a man very dearly to whom she was engaged to be married, but he died by a drowning accident, as you will notice in several of her poems in which she frequently refers to it. She never entirely got over the sorrow as she never would go on to the water under any circumstances, and never wanted to talk of it either.

She taught school after the death of her parents and went South to teach French for several years in a young ladies school, I think.

She also kept up her writing and made a good deal of money out of it. She remained single until about the age of forty five when she married Mr. Trask who was twenty years younger than herself. He was not an educated man or very ambitious either. He was not poetical or artistic, neither did he have money or

occupation. After living in New Hamp. several years, they moved to Framingham and she bought the beautiful Estate and Mansion at the top of the hill (from where I live) now owned by Dr. Knapp of New York, Mr. Trask having sold the house and everything in it after her death.

Mr. Trask used to work on the place and take care of the farm, the horses and cows & garden etc., and although they were so different, they lived very happily together and were always very devoted . . .

Mrs. Trask died . . . but she did not look more than sixty

She was a little woman, five ft. two inches tall, & weighed about 130 pounds. She was not attractive in looks & her facial expression was rather peculiar and did not show the refinement there was in her, but her bright, cheerful ways, her keen perception and wit, and being so well informed on every subject, made up for it, and the longer people knew her, the better they liked her. She had hosts of friends and she knew how to keep them.

She was very broad minded and always industrious. She could turn her hand to almost anything.

She was a good house-keeper and entertained a great deal and went to everything too. Was active in The Woman's Club & Daughters of the American Revolution and several

clubs. She was very fond of cats and it was her request that when she died that her pet cat should be buried with her in the same grave, and so Mr. Trask did so and carried out her wishes."

Miss (Mrs.) Shepherd claims that Clara Augusta Jones' husband Elbridge S. Trask departed for California after estate difficulties had been cleared.

Pseudonyms used by Clara Augusta Jones were Clara Augusta, her most famous one, Kate Thorn, Hera Strong. There may have been more as she was one of the most prolific of writers of the 19th century.

References: See The House of Beadle & Adams by A. Johannsen, Norman 1950.

EXCHANGE COLUMN

Wanted—Frank Reade and Jack Wright stories in any library except Pluck and Luck. Have many novels to swap. L. D. Webster, 811 No. Green Ave., Lake Worth, Fla.

Wanted—New York Weekly Vols. 22, 28 to 38 and 40, New York Ledger Vols. 33 and 45 to end, Saturday Night Vols 1 and 2. Payment in dollars. A. W. Lawson, 13 Charles Square, Hoxton, London, N 1, England.

Wanted—Wide Awake Weekly #13, 28, 29, 38, 39, 40, Lou Kohrt, 3749 Robinhood, Houston 5, Texas.

MEMBERSHIP CHANGES

64 Capt. Frank Acker, 1202 Lake Shores Road, Bayside, Va. (New address)
204 Charles Rothstein, 6 Deering Road, Mattapan 26, Mass. (New member)

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P. O. Box 214

Little Rock, Ark.

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